

## ***PIRACY***

A major issue confronting the maritime industry in recent years has been seaborne piracy and armed robbery against merchant ships off the coast of Somalia, in the Gulf of Aden and the wider Indian Ocean.

This dastardly scourge has cost the world's economy billions of dollars, but of greater concern is the human cost. A staggering number of mariners traversing the Gulf of Aden, Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean and other high-traffic and economically significant waterways have suffered from attacks. Poorly protected commercial vessels traveling through this area since the mid-2000s have provided ideal targets for groups of armed men in small skiffs who were out to collect ransoms for successful hijackings.

But recently released statistics from international maritime bodies show that incidents of piracy have decreased dramatically since the heights of 2010-2011, when the highest ransom alleged to have been paid for the release of a vessel and its crew was \$14 million.

According to a July 2013 global piracy report released by the International Chamber of Commerce and International Maritime Bureau (IMB), Somali piracy has fallen to its lowest levels since 2006. Worldwide, the IMB Piracy Reporting Centre recorded 138 piracy incidents in the first six months of 2013, compared with 177 incidents for the corresponding period in 2012. Seven hijackings have been recorded this year compared with 20 in the first half of 2012. The number of sailors taken hostage also fell dramatically; down to 127 this year from 334 in the first six months of 2012.

Despite this decrease in acts of piracy in Somalia, an alarming trend is manifesting itself in the Gulf of Guinea where kidnappings at sea are on the rise and a wider range of ship types are being targeted. This is a new cause for concern in a region already known for attacks against vessels in the oil industry and theft of gas and oil from tankers.

So far this year, 31 incidents, including four hijackings, have taken place. Armed pirates in the Gulf of Guinea took 56 sailors hostage and were responsible for all 30 crew kidnappings reported so far in 2013. One person was reported killed and at least five more were injured. Attacks off Nigeria

accounted for 22 of the region's 31 incidents and 28 of the crew kidnappings.

Meanwhile, in East Africa's Gulf of Aden and Somalia, eight piracy incidents including two hijackings were recorded in the first six months of 2013, with 34 seafarers taken hostage.

IMB attributes this significant drop in the frequency and range of attacks by Somali pirates to actions by international navies, as well as preventive measures by merchant vessels, including the deployment of privately contracted armed security personnel.

As of June 30, Somali pirates were holding 57 crewmembers for ransom on four vessels. They were also holding 11 kidnapped crewmembers on land in unknown conditions and locations. Four of these mariners have been held since April 2010 and seven since September 2010. Elsewhere in the world, low level thefts against vessels in ports and anchorages in Indonesia accounted for 48 attacks of which 43 vessels were boarded and some crew injured.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that despite the formerly noted progress, piracy remains a daily deadly threat for mariners and even recreational boaters. One incident is one too many; any loss of life among the world's seafarers is unacceptable; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Maritime Trades Department, AFL-CIO, its affiliates and Port Maritime Councils continue calling attention to an especially noteworthy and completely unacceptable aspect of piracy. Namely, most if not all of the so-called flags of-convenience or runaway-flags have either made woefully inadequate attempts to combat piracy, or they have made none at all. The burden of dealing with pirates is being borne by the seafarers themselves, ship operators and a few nations—including the United States—and the task of actually prosecuting pirates by even fewer; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the MTD, its affiliates and Port Maritime Councils reaffirm their commitment to spare no resource in winning the life-and-death struggle to stamp out piracy.